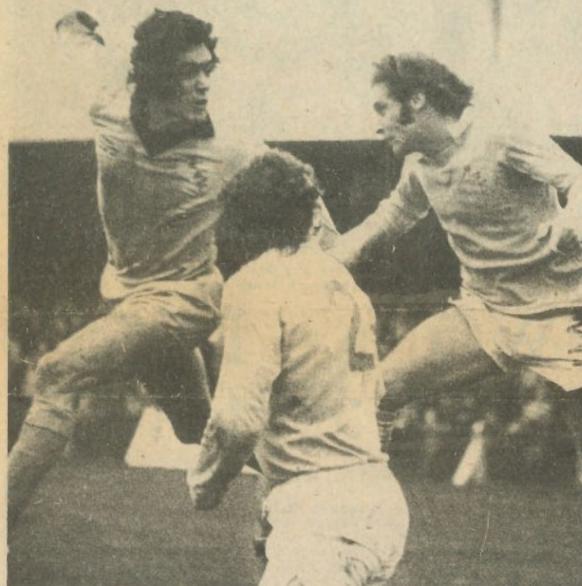


BLUES HOLD OUT FOR PLACE IN ROUND ONE



Steve Perrin (left) rises high above the Margate defence to head for goal during the first half of Saturday's Cup tie at Loakes Park.



Margate centre forward Carl Gilbert feels the weight of Alan Phillips' boot on his back during one of the many corners won by Wycombe Wanderers on Saturday.

SATURDAY'S FIXTURES

(K.O. 2.30 p.m., unless stated)

Rothmans Isthmian League, Division 1: Wycombe Wanderers v Cleapton (3 p.m.)

Atherton League, Division 1: Merton v Erith & Belvedere (3 p.m.)

Spartan League: Chalfont St. Peter v Berkhamsted Town (2.45 p.m.)

American Town v Harfield United

Rothmans Hellenic League, Premier Division: Burnham v Bicester Town.

THE width of a goalpost saved Wycombe Wanderers from a trip down to Margate in Saturday's pulsating F.A. Cup Fourth Qualifying Round encounter at Loakes Park.

And had Norman Fusco's 30 yard effort gone an inch to the right instead of thumping the upright, I would have fancied the Southern League outfit in the round at Hartwood. Margate, by far the most physical side the Blues have met this season, would have been a stiff proposition on their own ground.

But the question of a replay still however has to be settled in the minds of the 3,000 strong crowd, for the match ought to have been decided after 45 minutes.

Only once this season (against Hendon), have we seen Wanderers so dominant in the first half of a game. They outplayed their Southern League opponents much more than Margate were distinctly rattled every time Wycombe were in possession. Chance after chance was created as the visitors struggled to get into the game.

Their only answer to the pressure was to foul. Time after time referee D. Smith blew for free kicks and yellow cards for members about 20-30 in the first half. Offender in chief was centre half Steve Breach. From the first aerial duel with Keith Searle, Breach was up against it and after a series of warnings he was eventually booked. Still Breach fouled, upsetting and pressuring his opponents until eventually he had to be replaced by substitute Ray Summer in the 38th minute. Had Breach not been substituted, there was no doubt in my mind that he would have been sent off for continual fouling.

It must be a long time since a player has been taken off to prevent his own dismissal and it demonstrated just how severe the pressure was on Margate. Not that Breach was the only culprit. Full backs Dennis Butler and Alan Butterfield also dished out some stings to the Wycombe players, particularly joining Breach in the hook. If this was an example of Southern League soccer, Wanderers are far better off in the Rothmans Isthmian League.

Breach's amazing behaviour could not overshadow a superb first half display by Wanderers. They moved the ball with their opponents to pieces and their performance was reminiscent of their 5-0 victory over Kettering a few years back.

The only reason Margate were allowed to get back into the game was due to a goal gifted to them by the home defence which was few and far between. The first half saw them pull back to 1-2 and after the interval they looked a different outfit. That goal meant that Wanderers had to endure a hectic second half in which there were a number of scares, purely because they did not ram home their clear superiority in the early stages.

At first though, it seemed Wycombe would have this game sewn up by the break. Wearing a new light blue strip, they piled into Margate with Searle twice

bringing keeper Steve Bowtell into action. After eight minutes Searle had pulled a clever shot from Perrin out of the air and as Breach and Co. began to lose their heads, Wanderers took the lead with an all-important early goal.

The move that brought the breakthrough was one of the best this season. Tony Horseman, Perrin, Searle and Howard Kennedy all exchanged

Breach. Clowlow switched to centre back and Searle was for Searle in midfield. The move worked better than Margate could ever have imagined. With Breach gone, the visitors' defence found themselves more time and in the 41st minute, they snappet up a free gift to put themselves back in with a chance.

Until this incident, home keeper John Maskell had been

a minute when Bowtell held onto a rising drive from Kennedy. Seven minutes later Alan Phillips broke through from midfield and laid a superb through ball to Horseman's feet but after drawing a defender and slipping the ball to Perrin, the latter miscued his shot hopelessly wide.

As Margate began to tire, however, Wanderers at last hauled themselves back into the game again, forcing four corners inside two minutes. From one of those flag kicks, Horseman wasted the best chance of the half. Searle, receiving the ball at the post, drove a shot over the goalkeeper to Horseman, 10 yards out. Although two defenders were on the line, "Bogger" would normally have put this chance away with ease. This time he sliced the ball nearer the corner flag than the goal.

Kennedy blasted Perrin's pass over the top after 74 minutes, two minutes later Bowtell saved a full-blooded Horseman effort and then Kennedy teed two defenders before shooting just over the post. In between those Wycombe's efforts, Brown drove wide of the other end and when Wycombe's back four were caught too square.

Amidst all this excitement Butler was booked for scything down Horseman in the 77th minute. Then Perrin latched on to Butler's weak back-pass and hit the side netting but the closest effort of the half came from Margate.

Breaking out of defence, Wycombe was allowed to run straight at the defence for 20 yards or more. He even had time to look up and place his shot which flew over Maskell's shoulder, dive but thumped against the upright and was hastily cleared.

That was with five minutes left and there were some mighty relieved faces in the Wycombe crowd. As Mr. Smith finally brought this excellent Cup tie to its close,

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, K. Meek, A. Phillips, G. Hand, H. Kennedy, T. Perrin, M. Hollifield, A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perris, D. Evans (not used).

MARGATE: S. Bowtell, D. Butler, D. Stever, S. Breach (sub), R. Summers (3rd), D. Phillips, G. Gillard, C. Clayton, N. Fusco, B. Brown, C. Gilbert, B. Walker.

Referee: D. Smith (Homechurch).

Half time: 1. Goalscorers: Wycombe: Kennedy (10); Horseman (32). Margate: Gilbert (41).

Official total attendance: 2,876.

ROTHMANS ISTMHIAN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PF	CD
Enfield	17	14	1	2	34	12	43	8.0
Grange	17	13	1	3	32	12	32	1.0
W.Combes	16	9	2	2	22	13	27	0.0
Lhead	14	8	2	3	33	15	29	3.0
Welling & Son	14	8	2	4	27	12	27	0.0
Dulwich	17	8	2	2	22	27	30	0.0
Dagenham	10	8	1	1	25	15	25	0.0
Southend	17	7	1	9	22	22	24	1.0
Tooting	11	8	0	3	17	11	24	3.0
Croydon	17	7	0	2	22	22	24	1.0
W.Weston	15	6	4	5	25	21	22	0.0
Hendon	19	6	4	9	23	31	22	2.0
St. Albans	16	5	2	9	20	25	21	1.0
Woking	15	4	4	7	22	26	16	3.0
Slough	16	4	4	8	19	25	18	2.0
Colindale	16	3	2	11	17	30	17	0.0
Hayes	16	3	4	9	17	30	13	1.0
Hitchin	12	3	2	7	18	26	11	2.0
Worthing	16	2	1	13	14	30	10	3.0
Watson	16	2	1	12	14	40	10	3.0
Bromley	16	2	0	14	9	33	6	2.0